

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 09698 011544Z

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5527

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SUBJECT: RETIREMENT OF ALBERTO LLERAS HIGHLIGHTS CONCERN FOR LIBERAL
PARTY UNITY

REF: BOGOTA 9581 B) BOGOTA 9608

1. FORMER PRESIDENT ALBERTO LLERAS CAMARGO, IN AN OCT 30
LETTER TO BOGOTA DAILY EL TIEMPO, ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT
FROM POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. LLERAS ATTRIBUTED HIS DECISION
TO THE NEED TO AVOID DIVISIONS, SYMPTOMS OF WHICH HE SAID
ARE BEGINNING TO EMERGE, WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY.

2. THE SIXTY-EIGHT YEAR OLD FORMER PRESIDENT HAS BEEN, IN
EFFECT, SEMI-RETIRED FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW. HIS INFLUENCE,
HOWEVER, BOTH AS A RESPECTED WRITER FOR EL TIEMPO AND VISION
AND AS A WIDELY RESPECTED ELDER STATESMAN WHO TWICE SERVED
AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC HAS BEEN DISPROPORTIONATE TO
HIS LIMITED ACTIVITIES.

3. DURING THE LAST ELECTION CAMPAIGN, LLERAS CAMARGO PLACED
HIMSELF SOLIDLY BEHIND THE CANDIDACY OF ALFONSO LOPEZ.
IN CONTRAST TO HIS DISTANT COUSIN CARLOS LLERAS RESTRIPO
(SEE BELOW), THE ONLY OTHER LIBERAL TO OCCUPY THE PRESIDENCY
UNDER THE SIXTEEN YEAR NATIONAL FRONT SYSTEM OF
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PAGE 02 BOGOTA 09698 011544Z

GOVERNMENT ALBERTO LLERAS USED BOTH HIS PEN AND HIS

PRESENCE ON CAMPAIGN PLATFORMS TO FURTHER THE LOPEZ CANDIDACY.

4. THE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY, CITED BY LLERAS CAMARGO, ARE NOT AS YET OF A MAGNITUDE TO HAMPER SERIOUSLY THE INCUMBENT PRESIDENT. LIBERAL PARTY FACTIONALISM IS, HOWEVER, A CHRONIC CONDITION THAT, ON PAST OCCASIONS, HAS SO DIVIDED THE MAJORITY PARTY AS TO ALLOW THE CONSERVATIVES TO GAIN CONTROL. AS THE EUPHORIA OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE LANDSLIDE LIBERAL VICTORY RECEDE, THE TRADITIONAL INTRA-PARTY MANEUVERING FOR POLITICAL ADVANTAGE HAS BEGUN TO INTENSIFY (REF A). THUS THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY ALBERTO LLERAS OF HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE POLITICAL ACIIVITY PROVIDES HIS PARTY WITH A TIMELY WARNING OF THE DANGER THAT SUCH FACTIONALISM CAN BRING TO THE RULING PARTY.

5. COINCIDING WITH THE LLERAS CAMARGO ANNOUNCEMENT, CARLOS LLERAS RESTREPO, IN HIS WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA, HAD PRAISE FOR THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION.

LLERAS RESTREPO CITED THE RECENT GOVERNMENT RETREAT AT BONZA (REF B) AS A USEFUL SELF-CRITICISM. IN CONTRAST TO THE EARLIER EDITIONS OF NUEVA FRONTERA, THE CURRENT EDITION IS ESSENTIALLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION AND IN COMMON WITH THE LLERAS CAMARGO ANNOUNCEMENT, SOUNDS A CALL FOR PARTY UNITY.
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